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A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
Lord Mayor
And COURT of
ALDERMEN,

June 27. 1680.

BY
CHARLES HICKMAN, Student of *Christ-Church*
in *Oxford*, and Chaplain to his Grace the
Duke of *Southampton*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Henry Brome*, at the *Gun* in *S. Pauls*
Church-yard, 1680.

Clayton Mayor.

*Curia special. tent. die Dominico quarto die
Julij 1686. Regni Annoq; Regis Caroli
secundi, Angliæ, &c. xxxii.*

THis Court doth desire Mr. *Hickman* to
Print his Sermon Preached on this day
seven-night at the *Guild-hall* Chappel, before
the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of this City.

Wagstaff.

СЛУЖБЫ ПОДЪЕЗДОВ

Въ 1864 году въ мѣсяцъ
января 1864 года
въ 1864 году

Въ 1864 году въ мѣсяцъ
января 1864 года
въ 1864 году

1864

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TO THE
Right Honourable
S^R. Robert Clayton,
LORD MAYOR.

 Ince your Lordship has sentenc'd
this discourse to the Press, I
shall no longer dispute your Com-
mands; but according to the
true character of an English Subject, ha-
ving already asserted my liberty in the free-
dom of a defence, I must leave the final de-
termination to the Higher powers: Thus
manifesting my Obedience without betraying
my Birthright. I know the many censures
which a discourse of this nature is liable unto,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

and therefore in publishing of it, I have given an instance of that sincerity and boldness, to which I exhorted others; but having justice on my side, and your Lordship for my Advocate, I shall need no other Apology to recommend me to the favour of good men, or protect me from the detractions of the malicious.

My Lord,

Your Lordships most Obedient

and most Humble Servant,

CHARLES HICKMAN.

A S E R M O N O N

I KINGS xviii. 21.

And *Elijah* came unto all the people and said,
How halt ye between two opinions? *If the
Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him.*



THE Jews in the days of the Prophet *Elijah*, lay under the severest pressures of sin and judgment, and seem'd to all men but themselves not only miserable but desperate too: *Judah* and *Israel* were now become terms of defiance to each other, and though they were alike hated by the Heathens, and their neighbouring Nations sought occasion for their ruin, yet neither their publick calamities, nor the private tyes of con-

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sanguinity and friendship could refrain them from drawing their swords upon themselves: *Jerusalem* which was not long since the admiration and envy of the World, was now become a reproach unto it self, a scandal to its Religion, and a joy only to its Enemies, whilst their home-bred divisions prepar'd them for a forein captivity, and they reveng'd upon themselves the quarrels of the Nations which they had driven out; their Kings for many successions were such as shew'd that God gave them in his anger, and their *Chronicles* were only the enumeration of the follies, impieties and idolatry both of King and people; therefore was the wrath of God kindled against them, and the several judgments which he punished them withal distinguish'd their years and made up all the signal periods in their late Chronology.

And as a falling weight gathers strength from its motion, and the nearer it comes to the ground so much the swifter it moves, even thus the Jews by the violence of their transgressions seem'd to approach their final ruin, and that the iniquity of *Israel* was now full. Time and succession had given strength and security to their sins, the judgments of God did not bring them to repentance but harden them in their transgressions, the Heavens

vens over their heads were now become as brass and the Earth under them was iron, the Land that *flowed with milk and honey*, now *withheld her increase*, God did not give his blessing; nevertheless though their soul fainted within them, yet had they courage enough to rebel against their Maker, they forsook the Lord their strength, and they who were wont to go to the house of God as friends, now in their divided Tents set up the abominations of *Baal*, and consented only in worshiping the *foolishness of the Heathen*.

Thus have we a miserable prospect of a ruinous Church and State; for the iniquity of their forefathers their Kingdom was divided, and their own transgressions had multiplied Gods judgments upon them; in the hardness of their heart they slighted their danger, and in their folly they rejected the Lord from whom alone they could expect redress.

Then stood up *Elijah* like fire, and his Word burnt like a Lamp: in the power of the Almighty, he brought their Kings to destruction, and the people to the worship of the living God: he was ordained for reproofs in those times to pacifie the wrath of the Lords judgments before it brake forth into fury, and to restore the Tribes of *Israel*. Then came *Elijah* unto all the people, and said,

If the Lord be God follow him, but if Baal then follow him.

In which words we may observe, 1. a Supposition, that there is a God, whither it be the Lord or *Baal*. 2. An Exhortation grounded upon this Supposition, and that is twofold.

1. *If the Lord be God, follow him.*

2. *But if Baal be God, then follow him.*

1. The Text supposes that there is a God, whether it be the Lord or *Baal*, and this is a truth so manifest that the very *Heathens* who had no knowledge of his Name, have confess'd there was no Nation so barbarous but has constantly believ'd his power: the very *Jews*, though the most blind and stiff-necked generation, yet never came to that degree of obstinacy, but that they still acknowledg'd some power which they believ'd Divine: for no sooner did they forsake the Temple of the living God, but they set up Altars and Groves to *Baal*.

As for the suggestions of the Atheist, that there is no God besides himself, and no other life but this, they are groundless and uncertain: all their proofs are founded upon a bare possibility, and the belief thereof can never reach higher than opinion: such thoughts are the effects of deep ignorance and want of sense, and are only the faint

faint dying hopes of a languishing sinner: for there is none would deny the power of God, but he that through his Vices despairs of his mercy. He that can affirm Divinity to be a fancy, and Religion the contrivance of a Politician, may with as much reason affirm, that the whole World is but an apparition, that we do but dream of Cities and Palaces, and these Walls which we behold are but the phantastical delusions of a sickly brain. He that can deny the being of a God, may also deny the being of a Man.

Again, the opinion of the Atheist is not only very unreasonable but also very dangerous: for supposing it were true, that this life determines his being (which yet cannot be known till after death) yet when Death has swallow'd him up in forgetfulness and brought him to nothing, where then is the reward of his dangerous experiment, or who shall inherit the praise and glory of his notable discovery? But if his opinion should prove false, (as he has great reason to suspect from the uncertain grounds of his belief) if Death the Minister of God should preach his Gospel of terrors unto him, and the pains of Hell convince him of his mistake, what profit has he then of all his travail? the hardness of his heart cannot beat back the everlasting flames,

flames, nor the obstinacy of his unbelief persuade him out of his senses, though now it persuades him out of his reason.

Far be it from me therefore, in a Christian Congregation, from endeavouring to convince so gross and absurd a belief; to confute the error here, is to profane the truth: 'tis an opinion that proceeds not from thoughtfulness and study, but intemperance and vice. Men debauch themselves out of their Religion; and Atheism is not the persuasion of the man, no nor the belief of the Devil, but the punishment of the Beast: 'Tis that hardness of heart, that reprobate sense to which God delivers up an obstinate Sinner; 'tis the last of Judgments inflicted by God upon him that has refus'd all the methods of his mercy; and therefore to argue a man out of his infidelity, is to dispute a Lunatick into his senses, or persuade a Leper to be clean; they are proof against all reason, and the Prophet in my Text would not throw away a miracle to reduce them.

Since therefore God has forsaken him, and delivered him up to the worst of all evils, that is, to himself, let us also leave him to pursue his own ruin, since he has refus'd instruction, and will have none to advise; God at length will awaken

waken him by his thunder, and stretch forth the arm of his Vengeance upon him, when there is none to help.

Supposing therefore that there is a God, I come in the next place to consider what is our duty to him, as it is express'd in the second part of my Text, the exhortation of the Prophet, *If the Lord be God follow him.* From which words I shall endeavour to shew,

1. What it is to follow the Lord.
2. In what manner we must follow him; and
3. How we may know whether we follow the Lord or not.

And 1. To follow the Lord is the sum and substance of all Religion: For if we consider him as our Father, then to follow him, is to pay him that honour and respect which is due unto a Father; as he is our King, we must follow him in a submissive obedience to his Commands; and as he is our God, we must follow him in that worship of his Name which he has revealed: But because the latter of these is chiefly intended by the Prophet in my Text, therefore it shall be the subject of my ensuing discourse.

The notion of a God, as it is infus'd into us by nature, does include in it such transcendent marks

marks of excellency and power, such glorious attributes of justice and mercy, that it is not only the duty, but also the inclination of man to fall down and worship. Yet since through the infirmities of our nature, we are compass'd about with such a cloud of difficulties, that our Devotion may either be too little or too much, lest our ignorance should betray us either to disrespect on the one hand, or superstition on the other, God has made himself our Guide unto his Sanctuary; by Apostles and Prophets he has continually instructed his Church in what manner he would be worship'd, and sent his only Son to give light unto us that sat in darkness.

'Tis our duty therefore to turn unto the Lord our God, and make his Will the rule of our actions, since by many and mighty instances of his mercy & power he has manifested himself to be the very God: Let us in all humble obedience fall down & worship: Since by his infinite goodness he has made himself the guide to our devotions, Let us not with the giddy multitude admire the novelties and devices of the Nations, but follow his directions with chearfulness and submission, for he is all goodness, and cannot deceive us; he also is all wisdom, and cannot be himself deceived.

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What folly is it therefore to seek after new inventions, and in the blindness of our hearts beat in untrodden paths, when God himself, who is the light and the truth, has made our way plain before us? Why should we choose to perplex our thoughts, and wander by our selves, rather than follow the guidance of our God, and the footsteps of our Fathers that went before us? The difficulties and intricacies of our ways are sufficient of themselves to exercise both our patience and our faith. Why then should we create unto our selves troubles more and more, and add unto our sorrow? since we must necessarily pass through a Wilderness before we come into the Land of *Canaan*, let us *commit our ways unto God*, who brought us hither, and *he will order our goings*, and bring us forth into his pleasant Land.

But if we cast behind us the Counsels and Commands of the most High, and trust to our own inventions; if through the perverseness of our hearts, the boastings of our discretion, or the presumption of our vertue, we choose our own ways, and our soul delighteth in our abominations; God also will choose our delusions, and bring our fears upon us.

For the presence of God is dreadful, his glory is too great to be rudely invaded by mortal eyes, and his Ark too holy to be touch'd by unskilful hands: Therefore he has set bounds to our devotion, as he did to the Children of *Israel* in the Mount, lest they should *press forward to gaze upon the Lord, and he break forth upon them, that they perish.* He has appointed our distances that we should observe in his worship; and taught us what an awful reverence we should bear towards him, when we approach unto his Majesty. We must use such decent Ceremonies in our Devotion as may shew that we are not conversing with flesh and blood, nor putting up our Petitions to an Earthly Prince, but to an Almighty Sovereign, and the invisible powers of Heaven and Earth: A rude familiarity is an abomination to him; and though he humbles himself to receive our Prayers, yet we ought not therefore to debase him in our thoughts, and look upon him for such a one as our selves. When we approach unto the presence of an earthly Prince, we are cautious that we offend him not through any undecent behaviour, but observe all the ceremonies of address; we study such postures as may express his greatness and our humility, and such terms

as may best set forth our desires, and reconcile his favour. How is it then that we can rush in to the presence of the Almighty, as a *Horse rushes into the battel*, without either fear or consideration, and relying only upon a groundless confidence and presumption? that we should dare to proffer our unstudy'd Prayers and unsanctified persons unto the God of all Wisdom, unto whom the most corrected of our thoughts are folly, & the best of our actions are impure in his sight. So jealous is God of his honour for the punctual observance of his worship, that the punishment of the *offender* cannot sufficiently expiate his crime, but he visits the offence to the *third and fourth Generation*; therefore for the more exact performance of this so important duty, we must observe these following rules.

1. We must follow the Lord openly with boldness and resolution, as being neither afraid nor asham'd to own that truth from whence we expect salvation. We must not hide the Word of God in our hearts, but make profession thereof with our mouths, lest the Scornful and Profane should take our silence for a perfect submission to their cause, and the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph; lest the unrepov'd

transgressors should die in their sins, and their blood be required at our hands. Why then should we add the guilt of other mens sins to the number of our own? why should their iniquity be our ruin? Therefore, through God our *righteousness*, let us be *bold as a Lion*, and dare to be religious even in a sinful and adulterous generation; and let the Prophet in my Text be our great example, who alone did withstand the Congregation of the Priests of *Baal*, and brought the whole Assembly of *Israel* into subjection: He cast not in his Lot amongst the prevailing Idolaters, nor went forth with the multitude to their fashionable devotions, but withstood them to the face, and maintain'd the honour of his Church when he was the only Prophet left therein.

Nothing can excuse the cowardice and falsehood of him who denies or dissembles that faith which he believes; and if we are asham'd of Christ and his words before men, of us also will the Son of man be asham'd when he cometh in the glory of his Father.

2. We must follow the Lord stedfastly with constancy and perseverance, not wavering in our belief, nor waxing faint in the day of tryal, but still pressing forwards in our course, and
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with our faith overcoming all the difficulties in our way. O *Elijah*, how wast thou honour'd in thy wondrous works, and who may glory like unto thee? Such was the assurance of our great Prophet, so strong and active was his faith, that he made the very laws of nature give place unto it, and brought down fire from Heaven to convince the people.

Through all the difficulties that attend our faith, and the dangers that threaten the profession of it, we must still look unto God, who has promis'd that he will never leave us nor forsake us: We must not at any time, nor upon any pretence bow down the knee to *Baal*, nor shew any compliance with the worship of a strange god, lest our hearts at length should be inclin'd to their folly, and God in his anger give us over to follow their abominations.

And as we must abhor the house of *Baal*, so we must with equal care avoid all false ways of serving the living Lord, for it matters very much whether we worship at the Mount in *Samaria*, or the Temple of *Jerusalem*; and a man may Apostatize from the faith without renouncing his God: But 'tis much to be fear'd that he who never strains at Heresie and Schism, would swallow down infidelity too, should his
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interest command him, and from paying God a false worship, would soon be brought to worship a false God: for how can we expect that God will accept the sacrifice of our hearts when we come unto him with a lye in our mouths? How can we sing the Lords song in a strange Land, or testifie our penitence to God in a service which is to be repented of? if we deny the necessity of living in a constant and publick profession of the whole faith, we must deny the honour of Martyrdom to those who have dyed for it; we must reform our Kalendar, and rase out the names of many who have hitherto enjoy'd that glorious title upon Earth, and doubtless the Crown thereof in Heaven: But

3. We must follow the Lord with zeal and affection: if we are throughly perswaded of our own duty, we must also be desirous to see Gods Name glorified by others; and that not only with idle hopes and insignificant desires, but with active endeavours, and a real concern: 'Tis the glory of the Church of God to spread her arms abroad, like our Saviour on the Cross, and receive all mankind within its embraces; his Blood was a sufficient Atonement for all the world, and whosoever neglects the means and opportunity of advancing this faith, betrays the honour

honour of Christ his head, and the salvation of his Fellow-members; he basely suffers that soul for which our Saviour died, to perish through unbelief, and makes the merits of his death to be ineffectual. If the late Martyrs, and uninspired Confessors of our faith, who planted a Church amongst us with their sweat, and water'd it with their blood, had given way to principles of compliance and self-preservation, our Land had either continued barren to this day in its primitive Paganism, or been soon overrun with Heresie and Superstition. Had the Prophet in my Text contented himself with a dormant Religion, and confin'd his faith to his own bosom, *he* might have enjoy'd his ease, and the *Jews* their Idolatry without the trouble of this fiery tryal. Yet such was the zeal of *Elijah* for the Lord God of Hosts, because the Children of *Israel* had forsaken his Covenants, thrown down his Altars, and slain his Prophets with the sword, that he restor'd his Religion with a mighty hand, and return'd that severity upon the Priests of *Baal*, which they had exercis'd against the Servants of the living God: And I can never be persuaded but that a complying Christian is a contradiction in the terms, till the communion of Saints be blotted out of
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our Creed, and the Catholick Church be demonstrated to consist in the private breast of each particular Saint.

Nevertheless, though a zeal for the Lord be our duty, and heroical vertue be most acceptable in the eye both of God and man, yet it always happens, that where the greatest honour is to be won, there is the greatest danger, therefore we must be cautious :

1. That our zeal be according to knowledg, before we engage in the zealous defence of any cause, we must be well assur'd that the cause it self be good, lest instead of thanks for our diligence, we receive a check for our forwardness, and it be justly said unto us, *Who has required these things at your hands?* for if we have not sufficient authority to warrant the action, it is not vertue, but rashness to proceed ; if we take a groundless opinion for our foundation, and make not reason our judge in the consult, what assistance can we receive from it in the heat of action ? we have then lost all command of our selves, and shall be deaf to all advice ; our ignorance shall continue, but our vehemence, and consequently our danger shall increase ; we shall still follow the same blind guide that first misled our devotion, not knowing either how

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to stop our career or direct our course; like one that puts out to Sea without the assistance of either Sails or Anchors; we lie at the mercy of every wind and tide, and are in danger of being foundred upon every shallow, and split upon every Rock; therefore we must first beware of a *blind misguided zeal*: But

2. We must be cautious also that our zeal be according to discretion, we must make allowances for the infirmities of our nature, and not extend our passions to the utmost pitch, like him that spreads all his sayls for the speedier expediting of his course, till at length for want of a due proportion of ballast he is over-power'd by the impetuousness of the wind, and his Vessel overfet: Therefore we must beware also of a *fiery ungovernable zeal*, and make reason our judge, not only of the ends we propose, but also of the means we use.

The honour of God, and the defence of his worship are glorious undertakings; and yet even here, the excess of zeal is a crime, and the great importance of the end cannot justify any unlawfulness in the means; the will of God, as it is express'd in his word, is the Standard of good and evil, and he will not suffer his eternal Laws to be violated, though in his own defence.

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If it should please him to give his and our Enemies such advantage over us as may endanger the exercise of our Religion, we have our prayers and other lawful endeavours for our redress; but we must not defend our Church by an unlawful return of evil for evil, nor like our Adversaries, commit any act of impiety or injustice, though under the most specious pretence of fighting the battel of the Lord.

The goodness of the cause here is so far from justifying the act, that it only aggravates the offence; for the sins of a private circumstance may much easier be forgiven, where the frailties of our nature or the violence of a temptation may lessen the crime, and the obscurity of the Author may remove the scandal. But when a Law is violated or any injustice done for the sake of our Religion, both the scandal and the crime become conspicuous, they are then laid at the doors of our Church and bring a publick and perpetual blot upon our cause. If God stands not in need of our vertues, much less does he stand in need of our sins. If it please him to continue the light and truth of his Gospel amongst us, he can do it without any offence or fault of ours, *Si Pergama dextra defendi possent, etiam hac defensa fuissent*, with his own
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right Hand and with his holy Arm he will get himself the victory. But what can our Religion profit us, or what honour can it bring to the Almighty, when 'tis defended by such means as dishonour both God and Man; when our sacrifice comes polluted with blood and violence of its own, how can it atone for our transgressions?

Therefore it is necessary that we obey not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. St. Peter who was the first that drew his Sword in his Masters quarrel, was the first that deny'd his Name and forsook his cause; and doubtless who-soever fights for his Religion against his Prince, can never pass the muster without a *Romish* dispensation. It is not Piety but Faction that animates his zeal, and like the unjust Steward he says, What shall I do? I cannot die for my Religion, and to comply I am asham'd, therefore as Cowards do, he shuts his eyes against the danger, and the fear of Death makes him valiant; and if he dies in the cause, who would not sooner set the brand of Heresie upon his face than the Crown of Martyrdom upon his head?

I wish this Discourse were altogether as impertinent in these our days as I hope it is in this place, which seems to be stil'd the Metropolis

of Piety and the center of Obedience, where Righteousness and Peace do flourish, and Religion and Loyalty go hand in hand. And indeed it is only the practice of some misguided Zealots that can separate them without an absurdity; for no Man ever did or can follow the Lord to the tents of Rebellion; he always leads his people by the hands of *Moses* and *Aaron*, and has given us Kings to go in and out before us, and whosoever forsakes them forsakes also the Commandments of his God. Religion may be his pretence, and Godliness the Colours which he displays in his Banner, but 'tis Pride that whets his Sword, and Interest that makes it ready to the Battel: And to break Gods Law for the support of his worship, is no less a contradiction than to fight against a Prince in his own defence.

Since therefore the heart of Man is deceitful altogether, and we are subject to interpret those actions for the effects of Zeal, which are in truth the insinuations of the Devil, I shall shew (3.) how we may know whether we follow the Lord or not.

And I. If we truly zealous toward God we shall be zealous also for his Commandments; we must live in a constant intire obedience to
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his will, without which our worship is in vain, and we may cry unto him, Lord, Lord, but he he will not hear; for what mercy can excuse him who continually affront the God of mercy, or what power can save him who lives in defiance of that power which he acknowledges to be Almighty? Not that every sinful act proclaims us Traitors to the most High, and puts us out of the protection of his Law; as long as the Gospel of repentance, is in force, the unalterable decree of judgment does not pass upon us; but while we continue in an habitual state of sin, and allow our selves the constant enjoyment of any one forbidden Lust, so long we resist the will of God, and either question his Truth who reveal'd the Law unto us, or deny his power of punishing the breach thereof; and therefore Saint James tells us, *If we keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all.* And when the guilt of a universal disobedience lies upon us, we are surely very unfit to fight under the Banner of Christ.

But to avoid this fatal necessity, that they may still indulge themselves in their sins without forfeiting their Title to the Church, the men of this World have found out these two evasions.

1. They

1. They advance the merits and necessity of Vertue in their Doctrine above measure, not for the sake of God, but Mammon. They resolve the whole practice of Religion into Morality, and make good works the only means of Salvation; that when they have laid such heavy burthens upon the people as neither they nor their forefathers were able to bear, they may absolve them at their pleasure, and dispense with them at their own rates: Thus they prostitute their Temples again to the Money-changers, and make Merchandize of their Divinity; and then how easie is it for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?

But 2. This abuse has produc'd the quite contrary extream in another sort of men, that make Virtue utterly unnecessary to the life of a Christian, and confine all Religion to a bare relying upon the merits and mercies of our Saviour: and because God has predestinated some to be saved, they resolve to put themselves in the number, and register themselves Saints in spite of all their sins; they work not out their salvation with fear and trembling, but with impudence and presumption make God the Author of their sins, and give him the whole trouble of their salvation.

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And there are many such that make great profession of Zeal, and a noise about Religion, yet never trouble themselves with the duties that Religion lays upon them: 'Tis this that profanes the worship of God, and brings his Gospel into contempt: Not all the Blasphemies of the Heathens, not all the Usurpations of Antichrist, no, nor all the powers of the gates of Hell, can so far offend God, or prejudice his Church, as the scandalous practices of his false pretended Servants. The back-slidings of *Israel* were notorious, and she plaid the Harlot upon every high Mountain, and under every green Tree; and yet for all this, the Lord said, *The back-sliding Israel hath justifi'd her self more than her treacherous Sister Judah, who turn'd not unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly.* We must therefore first advance the Kingdom of God in our hearts, and seek his righteousness, and then all these outward things, the beauty of holiness, and the flourishing estate of a visible Church shall be added unto us.

II. If we be truly zealous for the worship of God we should also be zealous for the honour of his holy Name; we should not with a sordid compliance bear the reproaches which are daily cast upon him, nor see his honour laid in the dust by
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the prophaneness of every hypocritical pretended Saint, and every lewd Atheistical unbeliever; we should not with patience hear his Name traduc'd to authorize the sacrilegious rebellions of the one, and the impious execrations of the other; but if our presence cannot suppress, nor our exhortations reclaim their vice, we should flie from the tents of wickedness, and avoid their company like an infected place.

III. We must be zealous also for the honour of Gods holy Temple. When we come into his House, we must so behave our selves as shall befit the Majesty before whom we appear, and the place where his Honour dwells: We must here put off all Pharisaical greatness, and all dissembled humiliation; all sinful desires, and all wandering idle thoughts; otherwise we profane that place which God has sanctifi'd, and make his Service an unhallowed thing. The very laws of nature enforce a reverence from us to the places of devotion; and the Angels which here attend the prayers of the just, will certainly avenge the contempt of the profane. There is a reverence due even to misguided piety; and Histories relate unto us the Judgments which the just and true God has inflicted upon those
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that defil'd the Temples of their own invented *Deities*.

Whatsoever therefore our Religion is, let us adorn it by an ingenuous profession thereof; let our practice be according to the tenour of our faith; yea, and if *Baal* be God, let us follow him, which is the last part of my Text, and affords us these three considerations.

1. How the *Jews* came to doubt whether the Lord were God, or whether it were *Baal*.

2. Since they did doubt, how shall we be assur'd hereof? And

3. Supposing the Lord to be God, yet what use may we make of the Prophets words, *that if Baal be God then follow him*.

And 1. 'Tis strange that the *Jews* should so soon forget the Lord, after he had brought them out of *Egypt* with a strong hand, and led them through the Wilderness with a stretched-out arm, that they could blot out the remembrance of his loving kindness, who cloath'd them by a miracle, and fed them with food from Heaven; 'tis strange that this People, unto whom God had so often manifested both his goodness and his power, should yet fall away from his worship to follow a senseless Idol; yet this they did not out of any real belief of its divinity, but only

to gratifie their lusts according to the examples of the Nations that were round about them. 'Twas the Religion of *Baal* to eat and drink, and rise up to play: Whoredoms and Fornications are always the attendants of Idolatry, and the worship proper to the Idol: for this cause it was that the People bow'd down unto them, and threerout they suck no small advantage. Whilst men of vicious inclinations, and impotent reasons, indulge themselves in their sensual Lusts, there will not be wanting those that shall bow the knee to *Baal*.

How far the *Roman* Catholicks have made use of this policy to establish their Church, is notorious to all the world; how they comply with every ones inclinations, and allow the worst of men in their sins: for their interest they can indulge, and incourage too the highest enormities, and live upon the sins of the People. 'Tis this that brings such crowds of Nations to their Temples, and makes their Altars smoke; 'tis not the probability of their faith, nor the antientness of their traditions that has advanc'd their cause; but the looseness of their doctrines, and the liberty of their practices; the easie penances enjoyn'd to sinners in their lives; and the

the ample indulgences allow'd them at their deaths.

Thus they egregiously promote a Christian Church, by destroying Christianity it self, and set up a faith of their own that makes void both the Law and the Prophets, and frustrates the design of all Religion: And now they may take to themselves their boasted Universality, and glory that their doctrine is not only Preach'd, but Practis'd too throughout the world; for whilst sin is the universal distemper of mankind, 'tis to be fear'd that *Rome* will be the Catholick Church.

2. How shall we know whether the Lord be God, or whether it be *Baal*? We do not now expect the spirit of *Elijah* to reprove us, nor fire from Heaven to convince our unbelief; and yet God has not left himself without testimonies, even in these our days, sufficient to assert the truth of his Religion. I shall mention only two which are ground'd upon the authority of my Text.

1. We have our *Reason* for our judge; examine and try whether the Lord be not God indeed, and whether there be any deceitfulness in him: search the records of time, and see if there be any that can perform those wondrous

works which he hath done ; his truth will endure the severest tryal, and he needs not the ignorance of his Servants to advance their devotions, but delights in the understanding of his Saints, and requires a reasonable service. If *Baal* be God, then in Gods name follow *Baal*. The Prophet does not impose his own sense upon them, nor magisterially dictate his own opinion, but gives them commission to make use of their reason, and the freedom of their judgment in the search, and only requires them to make a return according as they find the proof.

Not like the practices of the Church of *Rome*, which requires an implicit faith to their unconceivable devices, and ties us up to all the dictates of their infallible Judge ; that confines all knowledge to the mouth of the Priest, and allows not so much as the evidence of opinion to the people : Surely the light was made to shine, and the Gospel was given us to profit withal, but their concealments are an argument of their guilt ; and if *Rome* must still be underground, it is not now to avoid the persecutions of tyranny, but the convictions of truth it self.

This

This is the first argument of the truth of a Religion from the Reasonableness of it; the second shall be taken from its *Success*: It was this issue upon which *Elijah* put the grand debate between him and the Priests of *Baal*; he pray'd, and God heard his voice; he believ'd, and therefore it happened unto him according to his faith; and the fire came down from Heaven to consume his Sacrifice. God has in all ages shew'd an especial regard to his Church, and with the watchful eye of providence has directed all its motions. How miraculous were the advances of Christianity in the Primitive times, when all the powers of the world set themselves with fire and sword to oppose its progress? How wonderfully have those uncorrupted streams of truth been deriv'd to us through all the seas of violence and falshood, with which it has continually encountred? and 'tis no less a miracle that we still continue in the true worship of God, though compass'd about with our Adversaries on every side; that our Church still retains the purity of its doctrine, notwithstanding the perpetual assaults of Superstition and Idolatry, and the secret underminings of Heresie and Schism; which is a great proof that God has espous'd the cause
of

of our Church, since no weapon has prosper'd that was lifted up against it.

'Tis true, that an evil cause also may be supported for a season by the force of evil arms, and therefore I should not insist upon this argument in our defence, but that there are still amongst us those who formerly design'd it to our destruction; men of so politick a faith, that they could measure the goodness of their cause by the number of their adherents, and thought a Victory did sufficiently justify a Rebellion; they had no plea for breaking down all the fences of human society, and violating the Ordinances of both God and man, but the dictates of their private spirit, and secret correspondence with God: and they had no proof of this their Almighty commission and correspondence, but from the success of their arms: then they boasted themselves of their Victory, and were exalted in their strength; and as they made God the Author of their sins, so in frequent thanksgivings they gave him the praise of its success: But blessed be God, our Religion, as it was founded upon no blood, but that of our Saviour, so it was restor'd to us from the usurpation of these men in peace, has hitherto flourish'd in the truth,

truth, and I hope will be supported by Godliness.

But thirdly : Supposing the Lord to be God, yet we may make some use of the Prophets words, that *if Baal be God we must follow him.* From these worshippers of *Baal*, we may in some sort learn how to follow the *living God.*

'Tis a shame to our Religion that we should go to the Heathens for examples of vertue, and learn piety of an Idolater; and yet if we observe the devotion of these Priests of *Baal*, and other Enemies of our profession, we shall find such strains of zeal amongst them, as may serve, though not for our imitation, yet for our reproach. How did they cry aloud from morning even until noon, and cut themselves after their manner with Knives and Lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. How do others also make it a piece of their Religion to rise up at mid-night to their Prayers, and awaken their devotion with cords and thongs? How did those Idolaters make their Children pass through the fire to *Moloch*? How do these also sacrifice not only their Children, but their Parents also, their Kings and Princes to their devotion? If their zeal could

could force them voluntarily to do violence to their natures, cannot we at the command of God himself use such necessary self-denial, such moderate abstinence and fasting, as may fit and prepare us for his reasonable service? if they to serve their Idols, could force their way through all the bounds of humanity, and follow their God as the *Jews* follow'd our Saviour, with Swords and Staves? Cannot we submit to the just and easie commands of the Almighty? *for what does he require of thee, O Man, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

The sum of all is this : *Let us no longer halt between two opinions*, but if God has set up his Standard in *Rome* for an Ensign of the People, to which all the Gentiles should seek, let us no longer conceal our duty, nor delay our holy Pilgrimage, but make our way with Fire and Sword; let us give the reins to our lusts, and commit all iniquity with greediness, that the vehemence of our passions, and the greatness of our sins, may add strength to our faith, and sincerity to our repentance; as if they loved most who had most need to be forgiven.

Or if God had withdrawn his presence from our solemn Congregations, and shrouded his glory in the private retir'd Assemblies; if the beauty of holiness consists in an unseemly disrespectful service, and the liberty of the Gospel leaves us to our own devices; If dissimulation and familiarity with our God be a virtue, and Rebellion against our Prince be the great commandment, then let us be zealous in this work of the Lord, and drive on furiously towards confusion; let us once more bind our Kings in chains, and our Nobles in fetters of iron.

But if these things are an abomination, and there can be no communion betwixt God and *Baal*, then my beloved Brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain. If the Lord be God follow him in the worship of his Name, with boldness and resolution; follow him in your lives with zeal and affection, and be ye constant unto death. Let neither Tribulation nor Anguish, Principalities nor Powers, things present, nor things to come, separate us from the love of God, or shake our resolutions. Let neither the temptations of the flesh, nor the evil customs of the wicked world induce us to take

part, with the destroyer : but let our good works shine like lights before men, to the glory of God, and the confirmation of his Church. Let our ways be upright, as amongst the *Gentiles*, and our conversation unblamable, to stop the mouths of of gain-sayers ; and let our faith overcome the world, and tread down Satan under our feet ; for this is a Christians triumph, these are the badges of our profession, and must be our Crowns and Diadems, when dignities and distinctions shall be no more. Without these it is but vanity to expect, and injustice to demand the honour due to the Servants of the Lord, when our Vices shal level us with the worshippers of *Baal*.

FINIS.